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ABSTRACT

The Time Management Workshop for adult learners at the University of Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) is described. It was developed when many adults, upon returning to school, expressed anxiety, questioned their skills and abilities, and reported study related problems associated with time management. Most of the self-instructional and workshop materials currently available on time management focus on providing basic tips for organizing and constructing study schedules. They are useful but do not cover many issues related to time management for adult learners (learning style, individual goals, time use and memory function, time use and misuse, and view of home, school, and career responsibilities). A theoretical background for the design of the Time Management Workshop is provided, looking at the androgogical model from Knowles and the time continuum model of motivation from Wlodkowski. The Time Management Workshop's overall goal is to assist participants in the exploration, definition, and decision-making processes regarding problems and issues of time management which are unique to their individual life situations. The workshop is highly interactive, with student interaction and discussion making up about 80% of the workshop. After attending the workshop, participants should be able to do such things as state their long- and short-term goals, trace their patterns of procrastination, and organize and prioritize assignments and commitments. This workshop has been an overwhelming success, with students reporting that they have a more realistic and less anxious conception of time management. Contains 4 references. (SM)

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Facilitating A Time Management Workshop For Adult Learners

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Facilitating a Time Management Workshop for Adult Learners

Introduction

All effective study strategies require the ability to plan and use time effectively and efficiently. Therefore, many students who experience academic difficulties report study related problems associated with time management. This is especially true of adults. Upon returning to school, many adults express anxiety and question their skills and abilities, even though they may be successfully balancing home and career responsibilities.

Problems with Traditional Time Management Materials

Most of the self-instructional and workshop materials currently available on time management focus on providing basic tips for organizing and constructing study schedules. Although these materials are useful, they are primarily oriented to the traditional-age student and do not cover a variety of issues related to time management for adult learners including:

1. the lack of reference to student individuality regarding factors such as learning style and individual goals - adult students are generally goal-oriented and come to college for a variety of reasons.

2. the lack of student awareness regarding time use and memory function - adults are pragmatic individuals who want to know the rationale behind particular strategies and methods.
3. insufficient student awareness of how time is used and misused - adults have multiple roles and responsibilities which leave them with little or no free time. They need to find out more about how the use of time applies their individual situations.
4. the student's inability to view home, school, and career responsibilities as requiring the use of similar skills - Adults need to become more aware that they are using the same types of life skills in many situations. This will alleviate some anxiety that they have about new situations.

Rationale

There continues to be an influx of adult students to campuses across the United States. The U.S. Department of Education's Center for Educational Statistics reports that ta the beginning of the 1980s, more than four million U.S. teenagers were in the 18 year-old bracket and that figure had already dropped to 3.5 million by 1986. It is estimated that by 1992, half of all students in undergraduate college programs will be over twenty-five years-old and twenty percent will be over thirty-five years-old. Cross (1971) notes that by the year 2000,

the largest age group in America will be between thirty and forty-four years-old. Adults come to college for a variety of reasons: single parents and displaced workers who wish to further their education in hopes of greater employability; women who married young and raised families return to school once their children are grown; and individuals who seek continuing education in hopes of career advancement and to keep abreast in their current field. The lives of these adult students overflow with commitment, responsibility, and role diversity. Colleges and universities need to respond to the changing needs of this changing population with support services designed to meet adults' needs. One such program that has been developed at the University of Pittsburgh is an approach to time management that includes active participation and individualization in a small-group workshop setting.

Theoretical Background for Design

The Andragogical Model

The workshop was designed using the assumptions of andragogy from Knowles (1980, 1984) and the time continuum model of motivation from Wlodkowski (1985) which are prevalent in the literature on adult learning. Malcolm Knowles first formulated his concept of andragogy in 1980. He defined andragogy as " the art and science of helping adults learn" (p. 37). He prefers to think of the andragogical model as an extension or part of the more familiar concept of pedagogy which is "the art and science

of teaching children" (p.37). Andragogy reflects the idea that the instructor is more of a facilitator than a teacher. The specific assumptions inherent in Knowles' andragogical model are:

1. The adult learner is self-directing.
2. The adult learner has a wide variety of accumulated knowledge and experience which needs to be considered and related in planning new learning experiences.
3. The adult learner's orientation to learning ia problem-centered. That is, for the most part, adults do not learn for the sake of learning, they learn to solve problems.
4. The adult learner becomes ready to learn when he experiences the need to know something in order to perform more effectively in some aspect of his life.

The Time Continuum Model of Motivation

Like Knowles, Wlodkowski (1985) sees adults as pragmatic, goal-oriented, internally motivated individuals who motivations for learning depend primarily on their needs at a given time in the learning process. The Time Continuum Model of Motivation suggests instructional behaviors and strategies to be used with adults. These strategies are grouped according to three time-frames within the learning process. The learning process can be organized around a course, class, or one task. The Time Continuum Model of Motivation is organized as follows:

I. At the beginning of the learning process, the instructor should:

1. determine and establish positive learner attitudes.
2. determine and address learner needs.

II. During the learning Process, the instructor should:

1. provide stimulation to learners.
2. ensure a positive affective experience and emotional climate.

III. At the end of the learning process, the instructor should:

1. reaffirm feelings of competence.
2. provide reinforcement

The Time Management Workshop

The Time Management Workshop for adult learners was first developed by the authors at the University of Pittsburgh in 1985. It was first used with the College of General Studies (evening college) and later adapted for use with the University External Studies Program (an undergraduate external degree program), with other schools, and with the Pitt Informal Program (a non-credit program). Although the adult target groups differed somewhat in focus, only minor adaptations were needed.

The overall goal of the time management workshop was to assist participants in the exploration, definition, and decision-making processes regarding problems and issues of time management which were unique to their individual life situations. In relation to this, the following terminal objectives were established for the workshop:

After attending the workshop, participants should be able to:

1. state their long-term and short-term goals.
2. trace their patterns of procrastination.
3. select effective time management strategies to combat procrastination.
4. relate general memory principles to the effective use of time.
5. organize and prioritize assignments and commitments related to home, office, coursework, etc.

The workshop was usually offered approximately two to three weeks into a new term. This enable participants to determine the demands of the term and to develop somewhat of a routine, however, it was still early enough in term for participants to not fall too far behind and to make adaptations in their patterns. Workshop sessions were generally two hours long and at least two or three sessions were needed because activities and assignments were given which focused on student self-diagnosis and experimentation with new strategies.

The time management workshop was organized around the following content sections:

I. Introduction to the workshop and workshop participants

II. The relationship of memory principles to the use and misuse of time

III. General issues to consider in time planning

IV. Tracing patterns of procrastination

V. Methods to combat procrastination

VI. General methods to organize and prioritize tasks

VII. Creating a personal time management plan

VIII. Wrap-up and discussion/evaluation

The workshop is highly interactive. Student interaction and discussion makes up approximately eighty percent of the workshop. The instructors establish positive attitudes by sharing appropriate self-disclosure , by eliminating negative feelings and erroneous beliefs about time management, and by promoting the learners' personal control over their situation. Participants are encouraged to relate, question, and discuss the content of the workshop as it is presented. Students begin the workshop by expressing their personal goals for the workshop and by describing their concerns or problems regarding time management. Those examples are later alluded to by the instructors throughout the workshop, when relevant, to relate the content of the workshop to the expressed needs of the participants. This also allows the instructors to provide frequent and equitable responses to the participants.

The time management workshop addresses the affective dimensions of the time management process as well as the cognitive dimension. Learners need encouragement and assistance from instructors in integrating their emotions within the learning process. To do this, the instructors selectively emphasize what is being learned in the workshop with application to participants' daily lives. Instructors also acknowledge and affirm the participants' responsibility and significant actions that contributed to the successful completion of specific learning tasks in the workshop.

A variety of learning materials are used in the workshop. Most have been adapted from readings on time management and from exercises used in counseling situations. Students do not hand in assignments. They are encouraged to use the worksheets for their own review and to make notes which can later be used in re-examining their goals.

Evaluation of the workshop is both formative (as they workshop continues) and summative (at the end of the workshop). Formative evaluation helps the instructors to adjust the content and focus of the workshop as needed. For example, in some situations, the topic of procrastination and methods of combatting it have been of primary interest to the group, while in other workshops, the focus has been on prioritizing tasks and setting up a schedule. The summative evaluation using takes two forms: a discussion at the end of the workshop and a written anonymous evaluation. The discussion provides an opportunity to

instructors to determine how well participants were able to achieve their goal(s) for the workshop and to provide closure to the learning activity. The survey provides feedback to instructors regarding selection of content, methods, materials, and to determine the participants' application of the strategies and methods that were suggested.

The time management workshop has been an overwhelming success. Students report that they have a more realistic and less anxious conception of time management. Specifically, participants report that they become more aware of the things that they do to misuse time and that they have ultimate control over the situation. Students also like the small-group, informal atmosphere and they enjoy most working on assignments that have direct relation to their lives.

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